THE Rights of Primogeniture:

OR,

THE EXCELLENCY OF ROYALL AUTHORITY.

IN

A SERMON Preached before His MAJESTY in the Isle of *Wight*, upon the Anniversary of His BIRTH-DAY.

By the R. R. Father in God, JAMES, *L. Bishop of* Armagh, *and Primate of* IRELAND.

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Quam sub Rege pio——

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Printed for R. LOWNDES, 1648.

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GEN. 49. 3.

Reuben, thou art my first borne, my might, and the beginning of my strength.

THis is the beginning of *Jacobs* blessing his Children, which was an act (and a principall act) of his Faith, as it is *Heb.* 11. 20. And in this we may see a difference betwixt the death of *Jacob* and his Fathers. *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, were famous in their Generations: God is not ashamed to be called *their God.* And if we consider their lives and deaths, we shall find this difference. *Abraham* in his life was most glorious, his Faith famous, witnesse his offering his onely son to God with that strength of Faith, that al-

though he verily beleeved that *in* Jacob *all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*, yet was his Faith ſo ſtrong as to be content to offer him up, being perſwaded that God was able to raiſe him from the dead.

Now although his life was thus glorious, when ye come to his death, This is all that is ſaid of him: *Then Abraham gave up the ghoſt, and died in a good old age, and was gathered unto his Fathers.*

Commonly great things are expected from holy men at their death, yet ye ſee *Abraham* was but ordinary in his death.

Concerning *Iſaac's* life, the Scripture ſaith but little, and the ſelfe ſame words are uſed of him at his death, as was at the death of *Abraham.*

Jacob as ordinary in his life as ye ſhall meet withall; But his death was a Prophecy of Chriſt's comming into the World. He begins with *Reuben*, to whom (though he had no mind at all to bleſſe him) he gives his due; ſhewes him that the right of Primogeniture belonged unto him, if he had not forfeited it: *Thou art my firſt borne, my might, & the beginning of my ſtrength.* For this reaſon God commands, that the firſt borne ſhould have a double portion. And *ſo Reuben* ſhould have received, but that he forfeited it; *Therefore*, ſaith he, *becauſe thou art unſtable as Water, &c. thy excellency is departed from thee:* and ſo he gave it to *Joſeph.* In repeating the Genealogie of *Jacobs* ſonnes, 1 *Chron.* 5. 1, 2. *Now* (ſaith the Text) *the ſons of* Reuben *the firſt borne of Iſrael*, (for he was the firſt borne) but foraſmuch, as he defiled his Fathers bed, his Birth-right was given unto the ſons of *Joſeph*, the ſon of *Iſrael*, and the Genealogie is not to be reckoned after the Birth-right, &c.

Ye see, though he had forfeited his Birth-right, he could not forfeit his Primogeniture, but there was an escheate thereof to *Joseph*. All the rest had a single Tribe, set out to them, but *Joseph* had two Tribes, and so the right that should have gone to *Reuben* fell to *Joseph*. Besides this, had not *Reuben* forfeited his Birth-right, he should have had more then this double portion, for there was a promise made, that *Kings should proceed from him*. Now as in the former *Joseph* succeeded him, so in this of Eminency and Power, it fell to *Judah*, for so it followes in 1 *Chron.* 5. before named.

Now to Explicate this.

The Regall power which comes by discent is described by a double Eminency. *The excellency of Dignity*, and *the excellency of Power*. By *Dignity* you understand, *all outward glory*; by *Power*, *all Dominion*, and these are the two branches of Majesty.

The *Greekes* do therefore expresse it in the abstract. In respect of *Dignity*, the Supreame Magistrate is called *Glory*, In respect of *Soveraignty*, he is called *Lordship*.

The King is not only *Glorious*, but *Glory*; Not only *Powerfull*, but *Power*. *Let every soule be subject to the higher powers*. Both are joyned in the Epistle to *Jude*, and in the 8. *Verse*, there is a wicked sort described, that *despise dominion*, *and speake evill of Dignities*. They despise Dominion that make no conscience *to blaspheme the foot-steps of the Lords Anointed*. These men dare do what *Michael* durst not doe, *Verse* 9. He durst not bring against the Devill a *railing accusation*, but these dare *speake evill of Dignities*. And what is their Censure? *Verse* 13. *To whom is reserved the blackness of*

darkneſſe for ever. We uſe to ſay, that thoſe that have Gods Tokens upon them are paſt hopes of like. Here ye may plainly ſee Gods Tokens upon theſe men, *they are reſerved to Everlaſting Damnation.*

Well, let us now come to unfold theſe two parts of Majeſty, *Dignity*, and *Dominion.* The excellency of *Dignity*, and the excellency of *Power.*

By *Dignity*, is meant, the outward Pompe and Glory annexed to the Scepter. For, it is Gods ordinance that there ſhould be an extraordinary ſplendour in Majeſty more then in any other. And therefore the Scripture doth often deſcribe the Courts of Princes, their Splendour at home, and in their Progreſſe abroad, with dignity and ſtate. *Acts* 25. 23. When King *Agrippa* and *Bernice* went to heare *Paul*, the Text ſaith, *They removed with great Pompe.* It was a thing beſeemed the Regall power ſo to doe. 1 *King.* 10. 2. The Queen of *Sheba* came to *Jeruſalem* to ſee *Solomon* with a great Traine: but ſhe came to a farre greater Court then her owne. And this State in Courts is not Pride, but it is a thing allowed by Gods ordinance, as Chriſt ſaith, *Thoſe that weare ſoft rayment are in Kings Courts.* And ſpeaking of the Lillies of the Field, *I ſay to you* (ſaith he) *that Solomon in all his Glory was not like one of theſe.*

If you ſee a man (though in Ruſſet) attended upon by others in rich Clothes, you will conclude that man (though in Ruſſet) to be ſome great Perſonage. The Queen of *Sheba* was aſtoniſhed at what ſhe ſaw in *Solomon's* Court; for, when ſhe beheld the Meat of his Table (he muſt not be ſerved as other men) the ſitting of his Servants, the attendance of his Miniſters, and his Cup-bearer, &c. the Text ſaith, *There was no more*

ſpirit

ſpirit in her. She was (as a man may ſay) beſides her ſelf to ſee this State. And ſo ſtately it was, that *Pſal.* 45. it is brought in as an Allegoricall deſcription of the Glory of Chriſt and his Church. I need not go to forraigne Princes to prove this, the Scripture doth ſufficiently evidence it. In *Eſter* 1. there is a deſcription of *Ahaſuerus* and his Feaſt, the like to which you will not read of in any other Story, it laſted one hundred and fourſcore daies, which was a full half yeare, and with the greateſt Glory that could be, *ver.* 4. When he ſhewed the riches of his glorious Kingdome, and the honour of his excellent Majeſty, &c.

So then, this is the firſt part of Majeſty, namely, outward Splendour, which is lawfull and requiſite to maintaine the dignity of a Prince. And as the Prince ought to have this in his owne Perſon, and his Attendants, ſo all Dignity and Glory reſts in him as in the Fountaine, and all Titles of Dignity are in him alſo. Even as ye ſee in the Firmament, 1 *Cor.* 15. *There is one Glory of the Sunne, another of the Moone, and one Starre excelleth another in Glory.*

In the Common-wealth, there are ſome Knights, ſome Lords, ſome Earles, &c. but all theſe differences come from one Sun, one Head, *the Prince*. There is no light in the Moone but what is derived from the Sunne, even here is borrowed, the Starres light is borrowed alſo, and when the Sunne appeares, they ceaſe to ſhine. The Starres at this time ſhine as much as at Midnight, but that the Light of the Sunne doth darken them. Even ſo in the preſence of Majeſty, thoſe other Excellent Dignities doe not ſhine at all.

2. To come to the Eminency of *Power*. For a King

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to have great State and to have no Power, he were then but a poore King.

A Duke of *Venice* is ſerved in as Great State as can be, but he hath no Power at all.

There is a Subordination of Power in all Government, which becauſe it cannot go *ad infinitum*, it muſt needs reſt ſomewhere, and that is in the King. *Let every Soule be ſubject to the Higher powers.* And the Apoſtle in 1 *Pet.* 2. 13. diſtinguiſheth, *Whether it be to the King, as Supreme, or unto Governours, as unto them that are ſent by God, for the puniſhment of evill doers*, &c. and he adds, *that by ſo doing, the Ignorance of fooliſh men may be put to ſilence.*

If any Profeſſour of Religion doe Rebell againſt the King, this is a ſcandall to Religion.

Now the Apoſtle did foreſee that ſuch there would be, and therefore Commands that they be put in mind to be Subject, &c. But if any that profeſſe Religion doe Rebell (as I ſaid before) it is the fault of the Profeſſour, and not of the Profeſſion; for the Church of *England* doth teach the Contrary.

But when men ſhall not onely practice, but teach Rebellion, (for *by their fruits ye ſhal know them*) this amounts to a very high Crime indeed.

The King (as Saint *Peter* ſaith) *hath the Excellency of Power, as ſent by God.*

But, what need I ſay any more? We all ſweare that *the King is the onely Supreame Governour in his Dominions.* A man would think, that that word *onely* might be ſpared, ſince nothing can be above a Supream, but it is put there by way of *Eminency*.

There can be no Dominion in the World, unleſſe

there be an Eminency of power in some one or other. If a man be wronged in any Court, he may lawfully appeale higher, but then, Appeales must not be Infinite, there must be a supremacy of power somewhere to rest in.

The Philosopher saith, it must be either in one, or in all. Where the Eminency of power is in one, it is called a Monarchy. The King must onely have the Supreme power, for if any be joyned with him, then it is no Monarchy.

If the Power be in a certaine number, it is called an *Aristocracy*.

If the Power be in all, a *Democracy*; and all Power then is derived from the Body of the People, and where you say so, you destroy the *Monarchy*, and erect a *Democracy*.

The Duke of *Venice* hath (as I said before) a marveilous great State, and yet the State of *Venice* is no Monarchy, because the Supremacy of power is not in him. He cannot receive a Letter, nor make an Edict without the States allowance; Nay, he may be called to accompt by them.

I read in *Josephus* that *Herod* having offended *Cleopatra*, she besought *Antony* (who did not use to deny her any thing) to call him to accompt; but *Antony* refused so to doe, *Then*, saith he, *He will be no King*.

Look upon the Common-wealth of *Lacedemon*, They had Kings lineally descended from the race of *Hercules*; but shall we say they had Regall power? nothing lesse, because there were *Ephori* in that State, A certaine power in the People to call their Kings to accompt: the

Supremacy of power there was not in the Prince.

In *Switzerland*, there is a *Democracy*, and the onely Democraticall Government I know of. They have their Magistrates that governe the people. And yet though there be many Magistrates that governe in those Cantons, this is no *Aristocracy*, for all the Magistrates in *Switzerland* are accomptable to the people, and all their power is limited by them. The *Supremacy of power* is in the people there, and thence it comes to be a *Democracy*.

Eminency of Power. In the word of a King there is Power, saith the Preacher, *Eccles.* 8. 4. It was wont to be so, and by the word of God you see it ought to be so. But I will not enlarge upon this. It may be some Ears will not indure sound Doctrine.

But the King we see must be acknowledged to be Supreame, and no Superior to the King.

Farre be it from me (being in Gods place) to flatter any man, I thanke God I fear no flesh, but do deliver the truth.

Having now spoken of the two branches of Majesty, *Dignity*, and *Power*. We shall speake of a Birthright that descends to Kings. It should have been *Reuben's* right here, if God had not taken it from him for a fault.

This day is the Birth-day of our Soveraigne Lord. Birth-dayes of Kings have been usually celebrated with great solemnity in former times. *Herod's* Birth-day was celebrated many years after his death: and the *Herodians* (for the many mighty workes that *Herod* did) believed him to be the Messiah.

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It pleaſeth God that this day begins the 49. year of His life, and let me call it the year of Jubile to His Majeſtie.

The *Jewes* had a cuſtome that in the 49. year of any mans life, he ſhould be at liberty, what ever his ſufferings were before. It muſt be the deſire and prayer of every loyall heart, that the King may have a Jubile indeed. This is that which Loyalty bids us doe.

I will not ſtand too much upon this particular. But this I will ſay, O that we knew our happineſſe; To have a King that is the ſon of Nobles! A King that is not a Child. A King that is at full age to Governe, by Wiſdome, and Prudence. And truely as God gives us this bleſſing, ſo he expects we ſhould acknowledge it thankefully. *Eccleſ.* 10. 16. *Woe be to thee O Land* (ſaith the Preacher) *when thy King is a Child*: And *Bleſſed art thou O Land when thy King is the ſon of Nobles*: that hath his breeding anſwerable.

To have him, when his experience hath rivetted in him ſound judgement, and ability to governe. The Lord threatned *Jeruſalem*, in *Eſay* 3. 4. *I will give Children to be their Princes, and Babes ſhall rule over them.* Thoſe that would have their owne wils, could (I warrant you) be content that the youngeſt ſhould Raigne.

To have a baſe man exalted, is one of the things that the Earth cannot bear. But ſome body muſt have the Government, it doth not belong to all. You ſee here is by Birth, one that hath a right unto it.

When *Jehoſaphat* diſtributed his Eſtate, 2 *Chron.* 21. he gave gifts to his other ſons, but the Kingdome unto *Jeboram*, becauſe he was his Firſt-borne. A Kingdome is not a thing dividable.

So the King of *Edom*, 2 *King*. 3. 27. though he tooke and offered his Eldest Sonne (that should have reigned in his stead) as an offering: yet in the propheſie of *Amos*, he is called *the King of Edom*, becauſe he had it in view.

Now to come to Chriſtians, We are Kings in our ſort, we are *Primogeniti*, we are the *Iſrael* of God. When God ſent *Moſes* to deliver his People, he bids him deliver this Meſſage to *Pharaoh*, *Exod.* 4. 22. *Thou ſhalt ſay to Pharaoh, Thus ſaith the Lord, Iſrael is my Sonne, even my Firſt-borne.* Here is our priviledge, though God hath many Sonnes, yet being found in Chriſt, we are all Firſt-borne. And ſo the Children of God are called, *Heb.* 12. *The Congregation of the Firſt-borne.* Every one that is a Member of Chriſt hath the Priviledge of a Firſt-borne. They are all Heires. In the ſame relation that Chriſt is, by nature, we are by Grace and Adoption: And being ſo, we have the Excellency of Dignity, and the Excellency of Power.

We do not ſpeak of the Power of this World: Chriſt ſaid, *My Kingdome is not of this World.*

They that preach, *The Saints ſhall reign upon the Earth*, did not learne it from God, *For our Kingdome is not of this world.*

There is not that Excellency to be found in any of the Sonnes of men, as is to be found in one poore Child of God.

Will you ſee *David* a King? when he comes with a pious Eye, *Pſal.* 15. 4. ſee who are there the moſt worſhipfull perſons. In whoſe eyes a vile perſon is contemned, but honours them that feare the Lord. When he

ſees

sees Gods Image in any soule, he honours him; and if he be a wicked man, a Child of the Devill, he is a vile person in his eyes. A Sinner (though otherwise never so Noble) is a very vile person, *Psal.* 16. *My goodnesse*, saith *David*, *doth not extend to thee; but unto the Saints upon the Earth.*

The Apostle Saint *John*, 1 *Joh.* 3. *Behold* (saith he) *what manner of love the Father bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sonnes of God, and therefore the world doth not know us*, &c.

But if they be so Excellent, How come they to be so despised in the World? the Reason is, because the World doth not know them to be such. The world doth not know Christs Children, more then they know Christ himself.

I have often thought, that when His Majesty was in *France*, where He was not knowne, a Neglect put upon Him there, would not have been in any proportion so bad, as the like must needs be amongst His owne Subjects. And so it is with us. We are Spirituall Kings, a Royall Priesthood: If the world did know us to be such, they would deale with us otherwise then they doe, *but our Life is hid with Christ in God*, and one day it *shall appeare*, and then shall the Righteous shine in the Kingdome of their Father.

Beloved, hereupon it is that the Children of God have *their Guard of Angels*.

The King hath a choice Guard to attend him, but if ye did see what attendance the Children of God have, you would admire. The Angels of God do pitch their Tents about them.

In the *Canticles*, the State of *Solomons* Bed is described with Threescore valiant men about it for a Guard. What is this but a Type of the Angels of God guarding his owne people, the *Militia* of Heaven?

But I perceive the time is past, therefore will end here.

The End.

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